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ABSTRACT

In 11 brief sections this document overviews provisions for preschool education in the Federal Republic of Germany. Topics discussed include the needs of young children; education from birth to 3 years and from 3 to 6 years of age; and the history of kindergartens. Problems of child-rearing and programs for parent education, as well as creches, child care services, foster families, kindergartens, mainstreamed kindergartens, costs to parents, and educational movements are discussed. Several models for early education thought to be worthy of consideration and emulation are described to illustrate efforts made by educators and politicians in Germany to improve preschool education and child-rearing practices. Kinderhauses and kindergarten programs designed to equip children to act independently in normal everyday situations and to think competently are among the models described. (Author/RH)

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The first steps towards independence

Preschool Education in the Federal Republic of Germany

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Foreword

The "Fifth Youth Report" for the Federal Government was completed in printed form in February 1980. According to the Youth Welfare Act it was to record the "efforts and achievements of assistance for young persons" as well as to "reveal the shortcomings and to put forward suggestions for improvement". The well-being of the adults of tomorrow is an important factor in Federal Government policy.

The number of children, juveniles and young adults younger than 20 years of age amounted to exactly 28.3 per cent of the total population of the Federal Republic of Germany on 31 December 1976. The number of young males was in the majority, by about half a million (Source: Statistical Year Book 1978). Of the 15,342,000 children younger than 18, 1,237,000 (8.1 per cent) live in "incomplete families", i.e. one of the parents is missing. The number living with the mother is six times greater than those living with the father. In the case of "complete families" the trend towards "one-child families" dominates – their number exceeds that of families with three children more than three-fold.

According to the constitutional pattern, childhood and youth in the social order of the Federal Republic of Germany are regarded as "phases of life in which the individual can acquire the requirements needed to be able to achieve personal development and realisation", according to the Youth Report. On reaching their sixth birthday all children in the Federal Republic of Germany have to complete an obligatory nine-year period of schooling. In recent years, educationalists have been devoting increasing attention to the preceding years, particularly the preschool age. Models have been devised nation-wide to do better justice to the requirements of children embarking on their journey into independence.

The journey into independence

On the occasion of the "Year of the Child", Astrid Lindgren, the Swedish authoress, was asked to express in writing her views on children's upbringing. The authoress, one of the most popular writers of children's books in the Federal Republic of Germany, was awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in October 1978 in Frankfurt-on-Main. Astrid Lindgren recalled a remark by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: "Wherever it may be, one learns only from those one loves". The authoress then wrote:

"Goethe once said, wherever it may be, one learns only from those one loves", and this is undoubtedly true. A child which receives loving treatment from its parents and which, in turn, loves its parents, acquires a loving relationship with the world around it and retains this basic attitude for the remainder of its life. This is also good even if the child does not belong to those who guide the fate of the world at a later stage. Should, however, contrary to all expectation, this child take its seat among the mighty one day, then it is a stroke of luck for all of us if its basic attitude has been stamped by love rather than violence. The characters of future statesmen and politicians are formed before they reach the age of five."

No statement could make it more clear just how important and formative these preschool years in a child's life are – just how fundemental they are in the early stages. The time so often dismissed by adults as the "playful age", belongs to those phases in which human beings are most powerfully formed, the time when the most lasting impressions are experienced. This is the age when children need most help.

I. The needs of the young

When Thomas was barely two years old his mother decided to take a secretarial post. As her husband, an engineer, was occupied for several days at a time at building sites some way off, preventing him from returning home, he was unable to look after the boy. The parents placed their son for a period of 12 months in the care of the grandmother living in a small town some distance away. The grandmother did have time for the child. But time was not the only thing Thomas needed. He also needed affection and attention; his creative talents required encouragement. His grandmother, a strict, orderly-living woman, was unable to give Thomas this. The consequence became apparent when Thomas returned home to his parents a year later. He behaved like a little child. He wet the bed and suddenly started to stammer.

At kindergarten the upset parents were advised to take Thomas to a speech therapist. The child's condition did not begin to improve, however, until the parents engaged the services of a humourous, kind-hearted elderly woman who looked after Thomas during the day on his return from kindergarten. Thomas remained in this familiar surroundings, came to trust the person looking after him, developed according to his age and had lost his stammer by the time he began school.

What had happened? Thomas, who had experienced affectionate parents as a small child, suddenly had to live with a strict grandmother, torn from his accustomed environment. Small wonder that he longed for the days when he had been much smaller – and then behaved accordingly. And, moreover, because he lived with someone he didn't love he found no incentive to learn. In her book "What children need", Mia Kellmer-Pringle, the British children's psychologist, comes to the conclusion:" In reality learning (in the broadest sense of the word) and the world of feelings, i.e. the cognitive and emotional aspects of development, understanding and sensations, are so closely interwoven – and this from a tender age onwards – that they can scarcely be separated from each other. Even with good, inborn development potential, normal maturity and favourable environmental conditions, the readiness or the motivation to learn and to progress can still be missing. The most important incentive to learn has its roots in the type of human interrelations the child enjoys right from the outset of its life".

These words clearly reveal that children need more than material security and regular meals. "Preschool education" means something quite different from premature practice in scholastic skills. Mia Kellner-Pringle is of the opinion that the means expended on behalf of children is "an investment by society in the parents of tomorrow". Consequently she demands that long-term youth policy must aim at two things: improved family care and public education programmes from earliest childhood to adulthood.

This is just what one is striving for in the Federal Republic of Germany. The kindergarten education programmes should, first and foremost, be aimed at bolstering children's self-confidence. The first step away from the family, which is usually taken when a child starts kindergarten, is regarded as the beginning of the journey towards standing on one's own feet. As a sign of growing independence.

II. Education in the elementary area

Sociologists and educators speak of education in the "Elementary area". This area is divided into two phases – the first covers the time between birth and the third birthday, the second the phase between three and six years of age. This second stage includes kindergarten and preschool education. The elementary area embraces all facilities which supplement family upbringing.

In this connection the "family activity" aspect must be mentioned. The Fifth Youth Report states that this is an area of activity of assistance for young persons whose objective it is "to help the parents – or other persons responsible for education within the family or similar social units – to fulfil their duties, in respect of the children's upbringing, to solve conflicts and problems and thus to create more favourable educational conditions for children in familiar surroundings".

In the new concepts for this area the social reference system constitutes the hub of this socio-pedagogical activity, and not the parents as one might expect. Neither does this merely concern "traditional family forms"; it also refers to "family-like forms in which children grow up, i.e. communes and comparable alternatives to small families".

III. The history of "kindergartens"

Concern for children's welfare has a long tradition in this country. "Kindergartens" have been in existence since the last century. A large number of leading educationalists had drawn attention, at an early stage, to the great significance of the initial years in a child's life. It is by no means the case that pedagogical findings on the formative years of childhood have only come to light in the last 20 years – they have merely experienced a greater resonance from a more enlightened public.

The first establishments for the care of young children were opened as far back as 1830. In his book "Vorschulerziehung", Prof. Wilma Grossmann, Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt, states: "The bodies responsible for these preschool facilities were usually middle-class associations". A mere 15 years later, in 1845, there were already 29 such "Kleinkinderbewahranstalten" (as kindergartens were originally called) attended by 3,635 children between the ages of two and six. As time went by the Churches assumed increasing responsibility for these institutions. On the Catholic side it was the orders, on the Protestant the "Diakonisse", i.e. sisterhoods, who undertook this work. This strong influence of denominational associations has persisted to the present. In 1974, 75 per cent of all institutions for small children (kindergartens day nurseries, crèches) were run by 'Caritas' (Catholic) and the 'Diakonisches Werk' (Protestant)" (Grossmann).

The first real, "kindergartens", however, came into being in Rudolstadt in 1840. It was the further development of a "Spielkreis" (Play Circle), headed by Friedrich Fröbel, the educationalist. In those days the name "Kindergarten" had a real meaning. The house in which the children were accomodated also had a garden in which they could romp. 24 children attended the first institution of this type. They were between two and five years old and came from middle-class and aristocratic families.

Wilma Grossmann calls these initial kindergartens institutions "of the enlightened bourgeoisie". By 1847 there were 7 such establishments located in Frankfurt-on-Main, Homburg an der Höhe, Gotha, Annaburg, Quetz, Lünen and Dresden. Following the failure of the 1848 Revolution, this movement suffered a setback through the Prussian prohibition of kindergartens which was not repealed until ten years later.

Friedrich Fröbel, the man who translated the kindergarten idea into fact, was a highly sensitive pedagogue. His mother died before he was one year old and he was brought up by employees in the formative years. Even as a grown man he complained: "Unfortunately the lives of human beings are hardly able to overcome the things absorbed in childhood, simply because their whole being is opened up like a huge eye, surrendered and exposed". From this Wilma Grossmann concludes: "For Fröbel a child's education begins at birth". He regards the child's first smile as "the beginning of the growth process in the child's self-confidence".

In the last century the education of small children was separated according to social classes. Working class children had "Kleinkinderschulen" which they attended two hours each morning and afternoon. There was a subtle difference, however: in the institutions for the working class the children were admitted at the age of one, but not till the age of three at the schools for middle-class infants. Pedagogue Julius Fölsing (1818-1882) justified the system of "Kleinkinderbewahrungsanstalten" (for working class children) on the following grounds: "The children of poor parents who, because of their occupation, are unable to devote the necessary care to their children are admitted to the institutions either for the whole day or for most of it and shielded from harm ... It is a necessity to get children away from the streets (in particular) and to take them in to protect mind and body from negative influences. There is no need for this in the case of children from higher social classes ...

In other words whereas Fölsing was still thinking along pragmatic lines, Fröbel's findings on a small child's psyche were far ahead of his time. He had run training courses for the first kindergarten staff as early as 1839. It was not until 1908 that the Prussian Education Ministry included the training of "Kindergärtnerinnen" in the curriculum of "Frauenschulen" (training schools for women). Three years later in 1911, the examination regulations for kindergarten staff and female youth leaders were issued. There had been seminars (the result of private initiative) since 1861 following the repeal of the kindergarten prohibition.

Fröbel's ideas on early educational promotion for children fell by the wayside in the first instance when institutions for small children were needed after World War I because so many mothers went out to work – the fathers had been killed in the war. The 1922 Reich's Youth Welfare Act stipulates: "In particular, day-homes must be provided for small children in need of supervision (crèches, Kinderbewahranstalten, Kleinkinderschulen, kindergartens) in sufficient numbers together with trained staff (nurses, infant teachers, kindergarten staff and helpers)".

Many years were to pass before the kindergarten was to acquire a purpose other than that of "providing relief". Professor Grossmann writes: "There was a gradual change of attitude towards the kindergarten in the '60s. Reference was made to the "functional loss" of the family, i.e. the family was no longer able to fulfil its responsibility as a system-stabilising socialisation agent. The disconcertion experienced by the family in regard to upbringing made supporting institutional measures necessary. Thus the estimation of the kindergarten changed from that of a social welfare institution to that of an educational establishment of prime importance". Dieter Haensch states in his book entitled "Repressive Familienpolitik": "Basically the kindergarten is not intended to be a childminding institution (at least it's not supposed to be) but an educational aid. It ist based on the cooperation of mothers and not meant to replace them".

IV. Family upbringing

1) The family – from the children's angle

Preschool education in the Federal Republic of Germany does not regard itself as a "substitute" for maternal or paternal upbringing but as a supporting or supplementary factor. At no time are the children to be educated "away from the family". In his book "Heimkinder" (Home Children), Andreas Mehringer, head of the Munich Orphanage for many years, stated in 1976: "Family upbringing is and will continue to be irreplaceable, whether we like it or not". But what is "family" actually? The statistics are known. Following a microcensus in April 1977, there were just under 5 million families with one child, over 3.7 million with two children, over 1.4 million with three children and 0.7 million with four or more children. (Source: Federal Statistics Office, 1979).

Children know full well what an "ideal family" looks like – and they also know only too well with which families they wouldn't like to live. Hessian Main School (Hauptschule) pupils expressed it thus in 1968: "Neighbours of ours are not particularly nasty, but they're not particularly nice either. In the mornings and afternoons all is peace and quiet. When the father comes home, however, the shouting starts. They have two sons. The elder one is shouted at most., the younger one rarely, but he gets hit more often and is punished. The mother goes out to work, so does the father. He comes home first and then fetches her. The lights are on until midnight or later every evening. I can see this because I sleep next to the window. I often wake up at night, that's how I know for sure".

This description by a twelve-year-old girl was published in her book "Elternladen – Familie zwischen Klischee und Wirklichkeit" (Shop for Parents – Family caught between cliché and reality), by Gisela Oestreich, professor of pedagogical psychology in Frankfurt-on-Main.

An eleven-year-old boy at a grammar/high school (Gymnasium) in the Karlsruhe area said in reply to his teacher's question: "If one could purchase one's parents which parents would children choose?" "I picture my parents as follows. The mother stays at home and the father comes home every evening. They are both jolly, but don't allow everything. If you are allowed to do everything and have your own family later and bring them up in this way, too, and then suddenly say no, it can cause problems. Parents should not be divorced since this is a burden for children. What's more, they shouldn't smoke. If the father goes to the pub for a drink and gambles his money away, this has a bad effect on his wife and, of course the children. The parents should adapt themselves to the children... Many parents start scolding right away, but I think they should talk sensibly about problems. This makes life easier for children.
Much depends on this upbringing in later life". This essay was written in 1976.

In other words children know fairly accurately what a family should be like – but do parents know this, too?

2) Aids for parents – concepts and programmes

Following years of reconstruction in the Federal Republic of Germany when material problems were the main concern, many young persons turned their thoughts to the question of upbringing. They wanted

to educate their children differently from the way they themselves had been educated. As a consequence, federal-wide discussion on preschool education broke out in the '60s. The first result was general uncertainty. How could parents best prepare their children for a life which was to be very different from their own? The authoritarian upbringing which stamped the fathers had, to some extent, turned out to be catastrophic – blind obedience, once highly desired in upbringing, was not a good way to prepare children for the future. Should one then give "anti-authoritarian upbringing" a chance? Those were the years in which there was a general call for "education and enlightenment of parents".

The Federal Government, the Länder (federal states) and the media sought to provide help in this connection. The "education of parents" in the broadest sense includes, for instance, "Elternbriefe", letters distributed free-of-charge to mothers with one child by several of the Länder and containing tips and advice on upbringing. New ideas were developed in this connection in Berlin (West) at the beginning of the '70s (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Neue Erziehung). The measures further include adult education courses and series of articles published simultaneously in the daily press entitled "Achtung: Kinder" (Attention: Children) as part of the "Zeitungskolleg" programme devised by the German Institute of Long-Distance (Correspondence) Studies.

This institution know in German as "Das Deutsche Institut für Fernstudien an der Universität Tübingen" (DIFF), was founded jointly in 1967 by the Volkswagen Foundation, Tübingen University and Land Baden-Württemberg as a public foundation. The initial funding was assumed by the Volkswagen Foundation for the first five years – from 1972 onwards the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany assumed the basic financing of DIFF. Since 1977 the Federal Government pays 50 per cent of this sum. The "DIFF Zeitungskollegs" (see above) provide scientific learning incentives and information in a generally comprehensible manner. One of DIFF's points-of-main – concentration is "Educational Science". The high level of the interest shown in this subject in the Federal Republic of Germany is revealed by the large number of listeners following education courses by radio (Funkkollegs). A typical example of such courses is the series "Beratung in der Erziehung" (Advice on Upbringing) which enjoys a listening audience of more than 50,000.

There are, at present, some 250 family education centres in the Federal Republic of Germany. Of these 71 per cent are run by the Churches, 11 per cent by local authorities and the remainder by independent bodies. Since remote regions are at a disadvantage the "Arbeiterwohlfahrt" (Workers' Welfare Association) has developed the idea of the "Mobile Elternschulen" (Mobile Schools for Parents). As one would expect, most of the family education centres are to be found in heavily populated areas.

The family education courses are taken advantage of almost exclusively by the middle class. The lower social strata can scarcely be reached by such means. Here the television has a greater chance of penetrating broader areas of the general public. The programme time on the subject of "Erziehung und Bildung" (Upbringing and Education), for example, has been increased by ZDF (German TV Channel 2) by 7.2 per cent since 1973. Furthermore, the highly important educational series "Kinder, Kinder" (Children, Children) has now been transferred to the evening programme when the TV audiences are much greater and when fathers, too, can watch. The ARD (German TV Channel 1) programmes have also been extended.

In his book "Sozialpolitik für das Kind" (Social Policy for the Child) Dr. Hans Bertram, scientific assistant at the Institute of Sociology, Heidelberg University, states: "The series 'Erziehung ist nicht kinderleicht' (Upbringing is not Child's Play) is undoubtedly the most ambitious attempt to date by the multimedia system to overcome one-way communication. This project is being run jointly by the WDR (West German Radio) and the Adult Education Association and financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Science. The programme compilers in this interlinked-system are being advised by the Adolf Grimme Institute in Marl. The Institute is attempting to process the results and findings of adult pedagogy for use by the media in such a way that the programmes can be employed by adult education courses for parents. At the same time the Institute is preparing printed course material providing training for course leaders and organising a concomitant scientific survey in which the course leaders and participants can be observed and questioned".

In a survey conducted among parents, 29% stated they obtained their information on problems of upbringing from television. 46 per cent, however, said that books were their most important source of information and 42 per cent periodicals. There are, in the Federal Republic of Germany, several magazines, often with a very wide circulation, (such as "Eltern", "Spielen und Lernen" etc) specifically concerned with problems of upbringing and presented in a generally comprehensible manner. "Whoever has found comfort following disappointments as a child is better able, at a later date, to withstand disappointing experiences and to overcome them". These words accompany a photograph showing a child in tears and a woman bending down to comfort it. This touching scene is included in a brochure produced at the

behest of the Federal Ministry of Youth, Families and Health and distributed free-of-charge. It is entitled "Familienbilder" (Family Pictures) and provides information on "Familien in unserer Zeit – Probleme und Hilfen" (Families in our time – Problems and Aids). The problems set out in this brochure occur every day. The solutions offered, however, as so unconventional that they are even acceptable to young persons who, in conflict situations, frequently react towards "their elders" in a protesting manner.

"Familienbilder" is only one brochure in this overall concept. Other pamphlets such as "Eltern helfen Eltern" (Parents help Parents), "Hilfen für die Familie" (Help for the Family), "Das Fernsehen und Ihr Kind" (The Television and your Child) are also designed to provide information and addresses to apply to in particular conflict situations. One of the most important tips refers to "Erziehungsberatung" (Advice on Upbringing).

At the present time there are some 700 "Erziehungsberatungsstellen" (centres providing advice ' for parents on problems of bringing up children) in the Federal Republic of Germany – by no means enough, as the experts well know. Desperate parents are just unable to cope with waiting periods of several weeks. For this reason a further 500 such parental advice centres are to be set up by 1987 – a plan costing some DM 85.4 million. These centres are usually affiliated to youth offices although welfare associations and ecclesiastical organisations also maintain such services.

V. Upbringing outside the family

No child can be brought up by its parents alone. That's quite impossible. The child is influenced by the neighbours' children. As the child grows older the TV set turns out to be a "secret factor of upbringing". Influences outside the family also help stamp the child. In addition there is a whole host of "official co-educators" in the Federal Republic of Germany whose services may be called on by parents.

1. The crèche

Crèches (Kinderkrippen) are institutions for tiny children, i.e. from birth to the age of three. This facility provides working parents with the valuable opportunity of having their child looked after. There are 871 of these crèches in the Federal Republic of Germany offering 24,719 places.

2. The "Day-Mothers" model project

The "Tagesmütter" (see above) pilot scheme was initiated and financed by the Federal Ministry of Youth, Families and Health. The first "Tagesmütter" began their duties in July 1974 in a focal point project in Reutlingen, Baden-Württemberg.

There had already been much public discussion on this subject since 1973 prompted by a report in a Hamburg woman's magazine on such "day mothers" in Sweden. Opponents of this project feared initially that, in this way, young mothers would be driven away from the cradle into jobs with the approval of the Federal Government. This facility was intended, however, to provide help, in particular, for those mothers who had to or wanted to go out to work. Children from socially weak families were given priority. In other words. "Tagesmütter" (also known as "Tagespflegemütter") were first sought for these children.

Women who offer their services as "Tagesmütter" have to fulfil certain conditions: they must be married, have children of their own and German nationality. They must look after the children in their own home. Almost two-thirds of these foster-mothers have only one child to look after. 20 per cent have two. In the basic principles of this model project it stipulates: "These mothers must agree (a) to cooperate with the parents (b), to take part in training courses, (c) to cooperate with the advisory staff and (d) to lend their active support to concomitant scientific observations. For this they receive payment according to the number of children they look after."

At the outset of this scheme model groups were set up at 11 different places in the federal area with 15 to 20 foster-mothers looking after 25 to 40 children for up to 10 hours a day on five weekdays. Their "fee": DM 320 per month for one child, DM 525 for two and DM 630 for three.

The Deutsches Jugendinstitut (German Youth Institute) in Munich which was responsible for the scientific observation of the project, issued a report in the spring of 1980. In all, 229 children belonging to 224 parents were looked after by 160 "Tagesmütter". It is an interesting fact that the family income and status of these foster-mothers were superior to those of the children's parents. Most of the "Tagesmütter" come from the middle class. In the case of the parents, the large number of individual parents (mother or father) responsible for the children's upbringing (37 %) and foreign workers (29 %) is conspicuously high. The majority, with a limited income and modest occupation, contrasts sharply with a sizeable group with a secondary school background and professions demanding qualifications.

The study by the Jugendinstitut repudiates the critics who feared, initially, that children would react negatively to alternating persons of reference (now mother, now foster-mother). In a comparison between "Model Project" children and children brought up exclusively by their mothers at home, those with "Tagesmütter" came out better. The staff at the

Jugendinstitut attribute this to the intensive pedagogical advice given to the foster-mothers.

The least problems in getting children accustomed to this idea were experienced with small babies – the greatest conflicts came when children were not put in the care of foster-mothers until the age of three. Many of the "Tagesmütter", incidentally, did not take up this activity because of the money but because they regarded the foster-children as welcome company for their own children. This new commitment and the contact with other parents helped to create a more relaxed atmosphere in their own families. In its final report the Jugendinstitut drew the encouraging conclusion:

This family service by persons trained for the job, as realised in the model project, is equal to that provided by the babies' and young children's own mother as far as upbringing is concerned. This is why it deserves greater public recognition and support. Now 30 groups have joined together in an "Arbeitsgemeinschaft Tagesmütter" (an association of foster-mothers) in a move to win the support of local authorities and independent youth welfare bodies for such initiatives in their local areas.

3. Foster-families

The contact between parents – in most cases it means one parent only – and foster-families is usually established through the local youth office. When a child is placed on a permanent basis in the care of a foster-family ("Dauerpflegestelle"), this means that the child's own parents are, as a rule, not involved it the day-to-day process of upbringing – but it does not imply that the child has been surrendered for adoption. There are various reasons for such permanent foster measures – a mother can be suffering from a prolonged illness, for example, she may be an addict, she may have embarked on a vocational training course which makes it impossible for her, from time to time, to look after her child on a daily basis. There were 67,000 children in "Dauerpflegestellen" in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1977.

Because education experts have long realised that upbringing in a family is far more preferable than the best of children's homes, an effort is being made to find places for young children, in particular, with foster-families. Since 1975 the number accommodated in homes has been decreasing in favour of foster-families. This is the practical result of the warning issued by sociologists and educationalists on the harmful effects of "hospitalising" children.

4. The kindergarten

At the beginning of the '60s lively public discussion took place on kindergarten education. A pedagogical concept was sought to supplement and enrich family upbringing. In its 1971 "Strukturplan für das Bildungswesen" (Structural Plan for the Education System), the then Education Commission recommended a reorganisation of the educational pattern for the three to six-year-olds. It was suggested that the kindergarten be included in the state school system as an "Elementarbereich" (Elementary Area) for the three to four-year-olds and to set up an "Eingangsstufe" (Entry Stage) for the five to six-year-olds which was to be affiliated to schools.

This suggestion triggered off violent controversy among the general public and was not put into practice in this form. Kindergarten has remained the norm for three to five-year-olds in most of the Länder. The experiments did not meet with nation-wide recognition.

In 1978 there was a total of 23,411 kindergartens with 1,396,869 places in ther Federal Republic of Germany and Berlin (West). (Source: Federal Statistics Office). During the same period there were 3,132 school kindergartens and preclasses with 70,775 pupils.

The basic belief that social contrasts could be reduced in kindergarten was not borne out in reality. Irene Herzberg writes in her paper "Quantitativer Ausbau im Elementarbereich" (Quantitative Expansion in the Elementary Area): "Kindergarten is more of a place for children from socially privileged and educationally motivated classes. The attendance level increases continuously as family income increases. Children whose family is dependent on social welfare attend kindergarten only half as frequently as children from families with an income of over DM 2,500. In the lower income-brackets the attendance level is well below average". The reasons are obvious. The argument put forward by the middle class that their child should practice so-called social skills in the company of other children does not catch on in social fringe families since their children play all day in the street with other children. The decision by working-class parents, in particular, to send their children to kindergarten depends on its distance from their homes.

According to statistics published in 1977 Land Baden-Württemberg has the greatest number of kindergartens, i.e. 5,422. 34 per cent are public institutions, 64 per cent are run by independent youth assistance organisations and 2 per cent by private bodies. Second place is enjoyed by Bavaria with 3,930 kindergartens. Hesse follows with 2,310, according to the Federal Statistics Office.

Several major firms privide kindergarten facilities with fully trained personnel for their staff – but such facilities tend to be the exception. This is not so much for financial reasons. Employers are reacting to the experience that female employees take little advan-

tage of this service. One reason for this could well be that most women prefer to make a clear distinction between their working and private lives.

5. The integrated kindergarten

During the course of discussions on the kindergarten system as a whole, a new term, i.e. "integrated kindergarten" has been cropping up since the end of the '60s. At that time Prof. Hellbrügge, a Munich doctor, set up his "Kinderzentrum" (Children's Centre) in the Bavarian metropolis. It was a kindergarten for both handicapped and normal children. He reckoned that joint kindergarten upbringing of this type would be advantageous to both sides – the handicapped children would get out of their ghetto situation and would participate in more activities, following the example of their non-handicapped playmates. They were suddenly prepared to undertake more and gained a new-found self-confidence. The first step in the direction of genuine integration into society had been taken. The nonhandicapped children came to realise at an early stage, i.e. during the formative phase, that there was no need to develop abhorrence or fear towards their handicapped playmates. In this way it proved possible to dispel the prejudices so often harboured by adults.

There are now integrated kindergartens of this type in Hamburg, Mainz, Darmstadt and Frankfurt-on-Main, in addition to the one in Munich.

In view of the persistent demands by medical and educational experts for assistance at an early date, increased promotion measures for handicapped children in the elementary area were called for in the 1973 Overall Education Plan. According to computer-calculations based on a microcensus survey in April 1974, 2.5 per cent of all children under 16 years of age (every 40th child) in the Federal Republic of Germany were physically, mentally or psychically handicapped, i.e. 6 or 8 per cent of all children of Kindergarten age (Irene Herzberg). More accurate statistics are not possible since there is no statutory obligation to register handicaps in the Federal Republic of Germany. These estimates are based on figures assembled by von Bracken, the Marburg remedial school expert, in the early '70s.
A large number of handicaps suffered by children can not be headed off at kindergarten age since such defects often only make their appearance when children have reached school age. Here we are referring to learning defects, i.e. congenital alexia (Legasthenie). It goes without saying that such learning problems occur at preschool age – but are not always diagnosed as such by parents and pedagogues at this age. Such symptoms are usually put down to inadequate maturity.

In her study Irene Herzberg reckons that 35 per cent of children of kindergarten age attend a special (remedial) kindergarten (these estimates refer to the year 1974). The Federal Ministry of Education and Science ("Grund- und Strukturdaten", 1978 issue) lists, for instance, a total of 3,031 school kindergartens and preschools in 1974; of these 2,734 were of a general nature and 297 for handicapped children. The number of special (remedial) kindergartens during this same period is given as 544. In 1977 the Federal Statistics Office already quotes a figure of 589 special (remedial) kindergartens and 3,203 school and special (remedial) school kindergartens. (In 1978 there were 3,132 school kindergartens and preclasses). School kindergartens are establishments attended by children of school age but still not considered ready for normal school. (Source: "Grund- und Strukturdaten", 1979 issue). The "preclasses" are affiliated to primary schools and are attended by those children who, although still not of school age, are considered ready for school.

6. Expenditure

Measures in the elementary area are a basic factor in the educational programme of the Länder (states). Here the points are set, in essence, for a subsequently successful generation in school and university. Expenditure in the elementary area came to DM 3 billion in 1978, i.e. 4.5 per cent of the total education budget. A fifth of all facilities in the elementary area, incidentally, are open all day.

The amount paid by the parents towards the cost of their children attending establishments in the elementary area tends to vary somewhat. In the case of parents in the low income-bracket the costs are assumed wholly or in part by the local youth offices. Several Länder are aiming to completely abolish parental contributions. In the federal state of North-rhine-Westphalia a firm pledge has been given that these contributions will be entirely borne by the state and the youth offices by 1982. Berlin (West) has already introduced this "zero rate". The Federal Government/Federal States Commission for Educational Planning states that, in 1979, the monthly parental contribution came to a federal-wide average of DM 50 for half-day attendance and DM 150 for a whole day, including lunch. The Commission quotes an upper limit of DM 200 for an all-day place.

7. "Children's Shops" and other parental initiatives

Following discussions on education in the elementary area, often conducted with great emotional violence, much has changed in the Federal Republic of Germany over the last 15 years. Traditional kindergarten education, bent more on relieving rather than enriching parental upbringing, has been given new, more fundamental content which is designed to

promote self-confidence and independence in the grown-ups of tomorrow in greater measure, than was the case formerly. This is mainly attributable to the "Kinderladen" (see title) movement in the late '60s. In addition, during the period 1965 to 1975, capacity increased by 65 per cent in the kindergarten area (from 14,000 to 23,000), according to the Fifth Youth Report. Even so, there are still too few kindergartens in rural areas. Country women just don't have the time to travel miles to the nearest kindergarten and then fetch them again at lunch-time. A certain percentage of social-fringe families also see little purpose in their children going to kindergarten. Other families firmly believe that "grannie" can "do just as well as the young woman at kindergarten" and leave their small offsprings in grandmother's care. As a consequence the Fifth Youth Report estimates, somewhat pessimistically, that "in April 1976, for example, only half the children of the relative age actually attended kindergarten and not the 65 per cent given by the Overall Education Plan whose calculations were based on a kindergarten target availability at the close of 1975". It is by no means the case, however, that about half of all little children of the relative age in the Federal Republic of Germany do not go to kindergarten. Part of them are in "Kinderläden" (see title) or institutions established through parents' private initiative. The "Kinderladen" movement led to highly emotional debates among the general public at the end of the '60s. An upbringing which allowed children to decorate themselves with finger-paints was viewed by conservative parents as "education towards muck". Many parents regarded "anti-authoritarian" education – which knows neither commands or prohibitions – as nothing short of "running wild" which would lead to adjustment problems at school.

The first "Kinderläden" originated in Berlin (West) in 1968. The name stems from the fact that the initiators often rented closed-down shops whose owners had either grown too old or who could not keep up with the rapidly spreading competition of supermarkets. The aim of the movement was to do justice to the "needs of children" both in play and social behaviour. This movement was borne by the established academic middle class and students. The cooperation of the parents was absolutely essential. Here the explanation is to be found as to why almost no working class children are to be found in the "Kinderläden". Working class parents had neither the time to actively cooperate nor the ability to further inform themselves by reading theorising special literature on the subject of education.

Subsequent parents' action committees were less radical in their objectives. These committees were formed mainly in smaller towns. They were the fruits, first and foremost, of middle class non-working mother's efforts. These mothers were not so much interested in their children creating murals as much as timely individual assistance for their children. These initiatives were generally known as "Eltern-Kind-Gruppen" (Parent-Child-Groups). As a general rule one person (quite possibly a man) looked after, six, maximum eight children. The basic idea was that the "supervising person" did not "prescribe" specific games or activities as is normally the case in the traditional kindergarten programme. He or she encouraged the children to undertake their own activities, to "play parts" frequently. In this way children rid themselves of mental anxieties and personal problems. They also learn much more quickly to integrate into a group. It is excellent training for individual children to do things jointly with others – and to hold their own.

Skills were frequently practised in a playful manner in these groups which would be useful later on, e.g. baking (especially for boys, in a move to get rid of age-old clichés) or handling tools. One very important aspect of the whole movement was the promotion of children's creativeness.

There were many points in both the "Kinderladen" movement and the "Eltern-Kind-Gruppen" open to criticism. Even so, the many ideas inspiring such initiatives were highly beneficial for the whole of public education in the elementary area. It even brought about changes. In general terms, the tendency nowadays is to prompt children rather than regulate them. The singing of children's songs, as in days of yore, is less important nowadays that the careful guiding towards successful achievements which bolster self-confidence and self-assurance. The ultimate objective is successfully coping with everyday situations under one's own steam.

VI. Models worthy of consideration and emulation

Several models worthy of "consideration" and "emulation" are given below simply because they clearly illustrate the efforts being made by educators and politicians in the Federal Republic of Germany to realise improvements in the field of preschool education/upbringing.

1. Didactical units in kindergarten

The Federal Ministry of Education and Science has promoted a study entitled "Constructive Principles of Didactical Units", devised by the "Arbeitsgruppe Vorschulerziehung" (Preschool Education Working Group) at the German Youth Institute in Munich. Within the framework of a model programme the Working Group is continuing, with this study, a project for which they have already prepared two other studies. They concern "Pedagogical Work in the Kindergarten" and "The Equipping of the Kindergarten". The volume on "Didactical Units in the Kindergarten" was published in 1976.

It states in this study: "The didactical units are part of the Social Learning Curriculum, developed between 1971 and 1975 by the Arbeitsgruppe Vorschulerziehung of the Deutsches Jugendinstitut (see above) and staff from model kindergartens in Rhineland-Palatinate and Hesse". The Arbeitsgruppe Vorschulerziehung was set up as far back as 1969, i.e. at the very time when vehement discussions on the reorganisation of education in the elementary field were in full swing. The creation of the Working Group was the result of a suggestion by the Minister of Social Affairs, Health and Sport in Land Rhineland-Palatinate. He asked for permission to take over the scientific responsibility for the model experimental kindergarten programme planned in this federal state. Two years later the Minister of Social Affaires in Land Hesse joined this scheme. Both model experiments, incidentally, featured on the list of promotion projects of the Ministry of Education and Science in Bonn. Six model kindergartens participated in this programme in Rhineland-Palatinate and five in Hesse.

The Working Group states: "An average of 520 children took part in the experiment in Rhineland-Palatinate, 25 children per group. There was about one adult per 12 children. One social educator, 22 normal educators and 22 child-care experts or trainees were involved in each experiment. There was an average of 450 children in the Hessian kindergartens, once more with groups of 25. There was one adult per 10 children." It is worthy of special mention that a kindergarten in a homeless persons' area was included in the model experiment in Rhinland-Palatinate. The children were all between three and six years of age.

The objective was to equip children with varying social backgrounds to act independently in normal everyday situations and to think competently. The play and learning programme was to be based as nearly as possible on the day-to-day situations of the children. Practical examples of this are: a child loses sight of its mother while shopping on a Saturday morning in a crowded department store. What's the best thing to do? The attempt was also made in one kindergarten to remove the boys' and girls' fear of the word "hospital" and doctors in white coats. Doctors and nurses at a neighbouring hospital allowed the kindergarten children to visit the pediatric ward. The Working Group stated: "During such visits the idea came about to establish contact with staff and patients in a more active manner and, in particular, to make patients stop feeling like zoo inmates worthy only of an inquisitive glance. Healthy children played with sick children, they brought small gifts, they sang songs at Advent. Contacts grew up between the healthy and sick, beneficial to both sides".

The Working Group described how educators recognise situations which need processing because children cannot cope with them. Children were asked, for example, whether they were often left alone at home and how they felt. The answer: "I'm not allowed to go into bed with mummy and daddy because they say they want peace and quiet; even when I'm afraid, I'm not allowed to call out". One child who can already tell the time, relates: "My parents went out one evening and said they were just going for a drink. Two hours later they still hadn't returned, but they don't have a sip of beer every half-hour. I got worried and went around the house listening at every door to hear if there was anyone who could possibly look for my parents. It was quiet everywhere, and I went back to bed". It is important for educators to discuss such situations with all children in kindergarten, to take away their anxiety and to help them solve their problems.

Parent meetings were also included within the terms of the model experiment. "Parts" were played to some extent to make upbringing situations clearer. One constantly recurring and important subject: leaving a child alone in the home when parents go out in the evening. The Working Group's report includes details on one of these parental gatherings: "Initially some of the parents adopted a defensive attitude towards playing parts. We tried to explain why so many adults find it difficult but why we, nevertheless, consider such a beginning, as positive. One father jumped spontaneously to his feet and said to the lady teacher: 'Right, I'm the father and you're the child', and immediately created a situation which help to relax the atmosphere. Many practical suggestions were made and the parents were able to see that everybody has a weak spot and that noone is free from problems."

Just how important the contact is between educators and parents emerged at the congress "Kindheit und Lernen" ("Childhood and Learning") organised by the Hanoverian Glocksee School in summer 1969, attended by some 1300 interested persons, mainly teachers. The call was made for teachers to also visit their pupils' parents in their homes. In this way they can (a) familiarise themselves with the children's background and (b) provide the children with an experience of success. In the eyes of the children the teacher's visit means recognition of the parental home. This was particularly true in the case of working class and foreign children.

2. The "Kinderhaus" in Hamburg

What is a "Kinderhaus"? A building which adults are not allowed to enter? Not at all – the Hamburg "Kinderhaus" in the Heinrichstrasse is one of the most interesting citizens' initiatives in the field of elementary education. This scheme was started in 1976 by educators with experience of the "Kinderladen" movement, and by parents seeking a place during the day for their child or who had had negative experien-

ces of traditional kindergarten facilities. To these must be added parents of schoolchildren, where both parents went out to work, and who didn't know what to do with their offsprings during the day. There were 45 children at the outset of the project. In order to give their project legal status 29 parents and educators founded a registered association entitled "Kinderhaus in der Heinrichstrasse". Former business offices were converted – most of the work was performed by the association members themselves – they quoted the labour costs as DM 80,000 to the Hamburg School Youth and Vocational Training Authority; cost of materials was given as DM 48,000, financed by personal loans by associate members. Staff at the "Kinderhaus" state: "The 'Kinderhaus' was finished on 21 July 1976, the responsible authorities approved the building, expressing their praise, and granted permission for 60 children to be accepted. We commenced operations with 45 children and 10 staff on 1 August."

They informed the population of Hamburg what they were trying to do: "Our children are to learn to act with solidarity. There is to be no rule of the toughest; the children are to learn to help and support the weaker members of a group. Individual skills are to be strengthened – a girl who likes making things is not 'slipped' a doll but, like all the other children, encouraged to develop her creative, questioning qualities. They are to learn that girls and women are just as clever just as strong, just as imaginative as boys. They are to learn to identify their interests and how to realise them".

One aspect of this project is important: they want their children to protect their foreign playmates from discrimination. This is part of the programmatic item "Erziehung zur Gleichberechtigung" (Education towards Equality). In other words, foreign children and German children, handicapped and non-handicapped children, are all equal, boys and girls. The parents pay DM 230 a month on average; those with lower incomes pay less, the better off pay more. In addition, friends of the project have produced a "Kinderhausbuch" which sells at DM 10. The proceeds go to the undertaking. Well-known musicians also give public performances on behalf of the Kinderhaus.

3. Promoted model projects

The titles of the projects tell us what they're all about: the improvement of the education system in the elementary area. Among the model experiments being sponsored by the Federal Government and the Länder there are, for example, in Berlin (West), "Socialisation aids for foreign children in Kindergarten". In Baden-Württemberg a "Social-Pedagogical Children's Centre" was set up in Heidenheim/Brenz, in this way; in Lower Saxony the project was "Preschool Education of Children from smaller Village Parishes in Children's Play Circles under the Guidance of Trained Staff". A model project entitled "Early pedagogical Assistance for handicapped Children and those threatened by Handicaps" is running at present in Bavaria. The list is endless – all the Länder have had ideas on improvements in elementary education.

The educational research projects in this area, jointly financed by the Federal Government and the Länder, are also of interest. The Deutsches Jugendinstitut in Munich is examining the "integration of children with special needs"; a survey in Constance University is looking into "Environment, Child and Elementary Area".

Why such a wealth of research projects and model experiments for such a brief period of years in a human being's life? After all, most of the projects are concerned with the area from 3 to 6 years of age. Why are the Länder making such great efforts to save parents as much expense as possible? In his study "The legal Framework Conditions in Kindergarten and Day Nursery" R. Briel gives an unequivocal answer: "The noticeable tendency not to burden parents with the costs but to transfer them in part to the public purse on a firm legal footing, is first and foremost making allowance for the changed prerequisites: public upbringing and education of small children in the elementary area, i.e. in kindergartens, is not merely a measure for individual minors or designed to substitute or supplement family upbringing. On the contrary, some 75 per cent of the 3 to 6-year-old children are provided with an educational programme in facilities outside the family".

Briel states that "birth and upbringing of the social rising generation are becoming a matter of public interest". Consequently the costs arising from public education programmes cannot simply be loaded off onto parents as a private expense. If the state is to stump up (and is willing to do so), however, it must first familiarise itself with the responsibilities it will have to assume. From this angle, too, there is both a genuine necessity as well as a legitimate reason for the model experiments and research projects.

4. The "Osdorfer Born" Project

"Osdorfer Born" is a new housing estate in Hamburg – a major housing scheme – 33 per cent of the buildings there have between six and twenty-one floors, 50 per cent have three to four storeys. A number of the tenants in the high-rise buildings come from clearance areas in Hamburg. The little children in these skyscrapers seldom get out into the fresh air. One can't just stick them into the lift and send them down to the street. There is a shortage of pubs and cinemas. The people scarcely know each other.

Hamburg students from the "Vorschulerziehung" (Preschool Education) project group are evolving a preschool concept for this housing estate. They began their pedagogical work in a practical manner. A start was made in a Red Cross barrack-hut near the buildings. By means of discussion evenings on preschooling and by personal visits to the homes, the 16 students eventually got to "their" children. In the report entitled "Das Vorschulbuch" (Preschool Book), compiled by the "Osdorfer Born Authors' Group", it states: "The parents readily agreed to pay the required 50 Pfennigs per day per child and to regularly attend the three-weekly parent evenings. The visit was complete with the regulating of the organisational problems; educational questions were not discussed. After these visits the size of the group was fixed at 15 children".

An interesting aspect of this project is the fact that children from the middle and lower social strata came together. Most of the families living in the high risers were dock workers and truck drivers; the tenants in the other houses were commercial clerks, policemen, remedial school teachers and surveyors. Work with the children took place daily from 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

The project got off to a poor start. The students were unsure of themselves; the middle-class children occupied themselves with building bricks and craft sets; the children from the lower-class indulged in tumultuous games. Only after the passing of several months was it possible to establish communal activities; here, playing parts proved to be very helpful. And the students discovered that what looked so good on paper just couldn't be put into practice. New concepts had to be devised. The "teething troubles" of this project are hectic, but the book which was published after three years of preschool activity, can help the work of many another educator in the preschool field. All the more so because the group of authors is so honest and admits all setbacks as well as the gradually emerging successes. The whole scheme was part of a project-study experiment at Hamburg University.

5. The parent groups

A major impulse towards reformative efforts in the elementary (i.e. preschool) educational area came from the general public – from parents. Parental interest, parental cooperation in preschool education, is both desirable and necessary so that the child, for example, is not torn hither and thither by several contrasting styles of education during such a formative stage of development. The fact that things don't always work out so well in practice can also be read in the Fifth Youth Report where it states: "In regard to kindergarten, problems frequently occur through the fact that supervisory staff, prompted by demarcation requirements (and as a result of them), tend to reject content forms in the shape of parental activity which may possibly arise as a consequence. Not infrequently conflicting views on the proposed aims of kindergarten work crop up between educating staff and parents".

Occasionally parents form themselves into "parent groups", either to put over their opinion vis-à-vis kindergarten staff, or to make strong representations to the authorities in regard to the provision of a kindergarten, or quite simply to discuss mutual problems to learn how it works in the case of others.

VII. Our neighbours from other lands

Some 20 years ago it was a minor sensation for German children to have foreign classmates – today it is usually means much more than just foreign classmates. Preschool facilities have had to adjust to this.

When the Overall Education Plan (BGP) was approved in 1973, the educational scene in the Federal Republic of Germany changed somewhat. In the meantime the Federal Government/Federal States Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (BLK) has made new analyses and forecasts – and with justification. What was forecast in 1973, has long been overtaken in 1980. The daily newspaper "Frankfurter Rundschau" commented on this dilemma as follows: "In the '73 Plan the BLK made a forward estimate of a quarter of a million foreign pupils in German schools in the '80s. The extrapolation of the Plan now reckons on a good million or more foreign pupils. This special development within the global decline in the pupil population has now been included by the BLK for the first time in its forward planning. It now sees that the number of foreign pupils is growing by leaps and bounds (every second pupil at main school – Hauptschule – will be a foreigner in heavily populated areas).

This pupils will need preschool facilities. At the close of 1977 just under one million foreign children and juveniles under the age of 18 were living in the Federal Republic of Germany. In the same year – according to the Federal Statistics Office – 100,100 children of foreign nationality were born in the Federal Republic of Germany. Even today a fifth of all children born in this country have foreign parents.

The Fifth Youth Report comments: "The opportunities of access to suitable preschool facilities for this particular population group are inadequate". It is crystal clear to politicians, sociologists and educators that there is a great deal to be done in the next few years. It is not just a case of the children of foreign workers needing suitable preschool facilities to integrate them scholastically and educationally and to

prevent them being written off as "school failures" – it is also concerns the children of ethnic German immigrants who likewise come from other education systems.

VIII. Kindergarten legislation in the Länder

The problem of making greater efforts to cater for foreign children is something which concerns all the Länder, varied though their legislation may be in this respect. All 11 Länder are bound by the Federal Youth Act (JWG) which they must take as a legislative foundation. First and foremost, the local youth offices, which exist in all independent municipalities and rural districts, work as organs of public youth assistance. They are all subordinate to the State Youth Office (Landesjugendamt) concerned. The Federal Government does not encroach upon this state sovereignty although it has the task of publishing a report on the state and performance level of youth assistance in every third legislative period – this happened in 1980 in the shape of the above-mentioned Fifth Youth Report.

The Federal Government and the Länder work together in many areas. The most striking example of this is the "Bildungsgesamtplan" (Overall Education Plan), drawn up in 1973 by a mixed Federal Government/Federal States Commission (BLK) and subsequently approved by the heads of the federal and state governments. The Federal Ministry of Education and Science states in this connection: "The extrapolation of the BLK to the year 1995 is now ready to be submitted for approval as far as the elementary area is concerned. The basis for the extrapolation is the 'Educational Inventory 1970-75', approved by the BLK in 1976."

IX. The training situation in the elementary area

It has long been realised in the Federal Republic of Germany that it is just not enough for teaching staff in the elementary area to sing children's songs with their charges. Children in the preschool phase need differentiated programmes, need to be extended to a great degree, need to try out their creative talents. For teaching staff, it is important that children's activity is stimulated and their self-confidence bolstered up. After all, the purpose of kindergartens is just not to look after children for a few hours but to promote their progress.

Playing parts has an important function in kindergarten work. Children lose their inhibitions and translate what they have experienced into action. A street scene is enacted: a car driver curses, a policeman blows his whistle – a child has not crossed the road at the traffic lights. Here, traffic regulations are learned – en passant – in a playful manner. Playing parts has a further advantage for teaching staff; they can learn a lot about the children themselves when they play. This special knowledge also provides better help for the individual children. One boy only ever shouts when playing the husband in "Parents" – just as he experiences everday-life at home. The child is afraid of its short-tempered father. This can provide kindergarten staff with a point of departure for a chat with the mother.

Smaller children are allowed to "paint" with their fingers. They can smear colourful pictures with their hands on the walls, carefully covered with paper beforehand. This is super-fun for the little ones, allowing them to release their creative urges and providing an opportunity to cast aside inhibitions. Scribbling on the walls, after all, is hardly permissible in the home, in most cases.

Older children are permitted to cook or bake – many kindergartens have a kitchen in which such activities are possible. One of the more imaginative games is "building a hut" out of cardboard boxes. Many educationalists reject ready-made toys because they limit a child's fantasy right from the start. A home-made "castle" out of egg-boxes gives a child the feeling of accomplishment (success) as well as lots of fun when building it. The child has created something itself.

In order to promote a child's creativeness in an optimal manner and to do justice in practice to the lofty demands contained in educational theory, educators must receive adequate training.

Up to about 10 years ago, all education in the elementary area was in the hands of women. There were reasons for this. In the first place the pay wasn't attractive enough to interest men. Secondly, the old prejudice still prevailed that educating little children was a "woman's job". This trend has gradually been changing in recent years. An increasing number of young men are showing an interest in kindergarten work.

Staff employed in kindergartens include youth leaders (social pedagogues), female kindergarten teachers, child care experts, children's nurses and social workers. Since 1971 social pedagogues have been and still are being trained at special colleges offering courses in social pedagogy and social work. The training lasts six semesters followed by a practical year.

Towards the end of the '60s a pedagogics course was introduced at several universities and teachers' training colleges. This course, culminating in a degree (diploma), lasts eight semesters. On completion of

the fifth semester it is possible to opt for "Sozialpädagogik". In several Länder students may also choose "Vorschulische Erziehung" (Preschool Education).

Child care staff (Kinderpflegerinnen) require a Main School Certificate (Hauptschulabschluß) and subsequent training at a full-time vocational school (Berufsfachschule). The length of training varies from one to three years depending on the federal state. Six of the Länder also demand a 12-month practical course.

The training of youth leaders (Jugendleiter) is also non-uniform. In Bavaria, for instance, the training courses are held at academies of social pedagogy, in Berlin (West) at vocational schools for kindergarten teachers and in other Länder at special schools of social pedagogics. The entry qualification to these courses is an Intermediate Certificate (Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss) and one year's practical experience – a sort of "prepractical". In an expertise for the special commission preparing the Fifth Youth Report on behalf of the Federal Government, it states in connection with this training: "In some of the Länder a minimum attendance of one year at a full-time vocational school with a home economics, social pedagogics or social welfare bias, is regarded as equivalent to practical experience". In other words a three-year training course is proposed. (Bremen is the exception with four years). The last part of the course, a 12-month practical, is carried out in a social-pedagogical practical training centre. According to the expertise, at the close of 1974, 41.4 per cent of all persons engaged in young children's education were male kindergarten teachers (known as "Erzieher" or "Kindergärtner"). During the same period 24.9 per cent of all personnel employed at day nurseries (Kindertagesstätten) were female.

Staff at educational-therapeutic establishments must have an additional qualification, e.g. that of an educational-therapist or they must have had a completely different profession. "Logopäden" (speech therapists) and psychologists are in great demand, as well as occupational therapists and children's nurses. At the end of 1974 this group accounted for 4 per cent of all staff employed in the elementary area.

The interest of young people in these professions has grown in recent years. Teachers were trained at 308 special schools of social pedagogics in the 1977/78 school year. 54.2 per cent are run by public authorities, 26.5 by the Catholic Church, 14.7 by the Protestant Church and 4.6 per cent by private bodies. Teachers (Erzieher), social pedagogues (Sozialpädagogen) and graduate pedagogues (Diplom-Pädagogen) are styled "specialist staff". Child care personnel (Kinderpflegerinnen), on the other hand, are referred to as "auxiliary staff" (Hilfskräfte).

X. The dangers for children

On official occasions there is a tendency to talk about "happy childhood". In reality, however, this "childhood" often turns out to be anything but happy.

1. Cruelty to children

One of the saddest chapters in the history of civilized peoples is entitled "The maltreatment of children". Since 1971 cases of child-abuse have been statistically recorded at the Federal Investigation Office. There were 1,472 such cases reported in 1978 plus 987 cases of child-neglect. Although these figures seem alarmingly high – the number of unknown cases is probably much higher. The Federal Ministry of Youth, Families and Health estimates that some 30,000 children are maltreated annually in the Federal Republic of Germany. In a move to afford relief in this connection the Families' Ministry has commissioned the "Kinderschutzzentrum" (Child Protection Centre) in Berlin (West) to evolve a further training programme for persons who work in such institutions in which they are directly confronted with the result of such child-abuse.

At the same time the Ministry called on the general public in a pamphlet not to keep quiet when there was "good reason" to believe a child was being ill-treated. The police or the youth office should be informed. In Hamburg a poster with the words "Child maltreated? Ring us up . . ." and a telephone number is intended to arouse the public's attention. This "Kinderschutztelefon" is an amenity provided by the German Child Protection Federation (Deutscher Kinderschutzbund), the result of a citizen action committee 26 years ago. The "Kinderschutzbund" in Hamburg works in close cooperation with the official advice centre which offers systematic help in the case of maltreated children. Neither institution is interested in taking "revenge" on the offenders, but in protecting the child. Attempts are made to speak to the parents and to remove external grievances such as too small a flat or the father's unemployment. Such measures are more effective for the child and for the whole family since a father serving a prison sentence only creates new problems for the family. On his release he returns home with bottled-up agression which he then vents on the children.

The German Press Agency wrote an article about the "Kinderschutz-Telefon" in Hamburg. The Agency quoted two members of staff, Maria Gerhard and executive secretary Hinrichs who know full well that child-abuse not only happens in areas populated by lower social strata. It is also to be found among the

upper classes. Maria Gerhard: "Maltreatment assumes other forms. The children are not beaten so much but punished by being starved of love and confined to their room – which is no less painful for a child".

2. The surrounding world of adults

The Federal Republic of Germany is a land full of roads and cars – the grown-ups are content with this state of affairs since cars are generally regarded as a symbol of prosperity. The children, on the other hand, can hardly share this sentiment. In 1973, for instance, 320,000 children under the age of 15 were involved in road accidents; 3,7000 were fatal.

The four walls of the home are no less safe: in 1978 2,017 children died as the result of accidents in the home. Every third accident involving a child happens at home. Falls take first place. In an informative and preventive action, the Bonn Families' Ministry, in cooperation with "Das Sichere Haus" (The Safe House) campaign in Munich, has published a "Safety Primer" to prevent accidents to children. This primer can be obtained free-of-charge and informs in an easily understable form about the hasards which threaten, above all, children of preschool age.

XI. Children question children

A lot is talked about children, a certain amount is done for children – but what do children want themselves, what are their needs? Last year a group of German St. George Boy Scouts questioned 211 children in a small municipality near Frankfurt-on-Main about their wishes. The scouts also wanted to know how these children were punished and what the parents thought about pocket money.

These answers can give grown-ups food for thought. True – 93 per cent of those asked receive pocket money regularly, but every fifth child did not think it can discuss its problems with its parents. Moreover, half the children wished that the father had more time for them and that the parents didn't quarrel so much. All the children appreciated affection (as a proof of attention) more than the fulfilment of material wants.

These statements are also part of preschool education. When all is said and done, parental love provides the best start along the road to independence.

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